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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 PHNOM PENH 000406

SIPDIS

STATE FOR EAP/MLS, P, D, L, IO
BANGKOK FOR T. HINES
STATE PASS TO NPS - STEPHEN MORRIS
PARIS PLEASE PASS TO US MISSION TO UNESCO - S. ENGELKEN

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [SCUL](#) [KTIA](#) [KJUS](#) [UNESCO](#) [EAID](#) [TH](#) [CB](#)
SUBJECT: CAMBODIA PREPARES PREAH VIHEAR PLAN FOR UNESCO
MEETING IN SEVILLE; SEEKS MORE ACTIVE U.S. ROLE IN
ENCOURAGING THAI-CAMBODIAN MILITARY WITHDRAWAL

REF: A. STATE 41703 - SECRETARY'S APRIL 23 CONVERSATION
WITH THAI FM KASIT
[1](#)B. PHNOM PENH 224 - CAMBODIA HOLDS ITS POSITION
(APRIL 3 CLASH)
[1](#)C. 08 STATE 78884 - GUIDANCE TO POSTS ON
CAMBODIA-THAILAND BORDER
[1](#)D. 08 STATE 77799 - INSCRIPTION OF PREAH VIHEAR

Classified By: AMBASSADOR CAROL A. RODLEY FOR REASONS 1.4 (B, D)

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: In advance of his participation in the 33rd session of the UNESCO World Heritage Committee in Seville, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of the Council of Ministers Sok An asked to see the Ambassador June 16 to outline progress by the Royal Government of Cambodia (RGC) in developing a full Management Plan for the Preah Vihear World Heritage site inscribed last July (Ref D). Sok An said development of the plan met barriers such as Thai foot-dragging on negotiations related to the disputed border in the vicinity of Preah Vihear and delays to agreed border demarcation. Thai non-responsiveness to reparation claims for the destruction of a market by Thai heavy weapons is another obstacle. Sok An also noted the RGC's difficulty in accepting Thailand on the proposed Preah Vihear international coordinating committee (ICC), in light of Thailand's invasion of Cambodia last July 15 and multiple subsequent armed clashes (Ref B). Sok An stated that withdrawal of troops and return to the situation found before last July 15 would go a long way to remedying the border dispute impasse. Prime Minister Hun Sen appointed Sok An to negotiate with Thai Deputy Prime Minister Suthep Thaugsupan on the border; talks might be scheduled for July, but success could depend on Thai parliament giving permission to a joint border demarcation committee at Preah Vihear. Sok An requested U.S. assistance to "encourage both sides" to reach a resolution. END SUMMARY.

Success Hampered by Thai Obstacles

[1](#)2. (C) Sok An recalled the helpful cooperation of the U.S. delegation to the Quebec City UNESCO inscription by consensus of Preah Vihear last July 7 (Ref D), that had culminated earlier successful meetings in Christchurch and Paris. Now there was no more success and the source of the problem was the Thai claim on sovereign Cambodian territory. Once the Thai referred to this as an "overlapping area" but now they claim it solely as Thai territory, he said. Last July 15, Thailand sent military close to the temple and invaded Cambodia; they occupy Cambodian territory and don't want to discuss withdrawal of troops. Although they say that they want to negotiate, the Thai raise problems such as the name of the temple, referred to in Khmer as Preah Vihear (PREE-ah

vih-HEE-ah). The 1962 judgment of the International Court of Justice which awarded the temple to Cambodia, referred exclusively to the "Temple of Preah Vihear" but the Thai insist on joint communiques referring to the temple as Khao Praviharn (the Thai name). Sok An cited this as an example of Thai efforts to delay negotiations or render them unproductive. He noted the unilateral Thai demarcation of the borderline in the vicinity of Preah Vihear was inconsistent with the 1908 map used by the ICJ. Sok An complained that a bilateral team ready to begin demarcation in late May was halted when the Thai pulled out of a previously agreed mission, citing the excuse that they needed permission from the Thai parliament.

13. (C) Sok An noted that UNESCO delegations continued to go to the main Preah Vihear Temple complex (recognized to be in Cambodian territory) to continue to develop the required UNESCO World Heritage Management Plan. Pulling out a foot-high stack of reports, he walked the Ambassador through completed and draft plans, including plans to preserve the site's "spectacular landscape environment" overlooking virgin Cambodian forest from the temple perched atop a cliff on the Dangrek Range. Part of the landscape seen from that view was being referred to as the Sussman Rectangle, he noted, in honor of private consultant Richard Sussman, a retired U.S. National Park Service official.

Reparations From April 3 Destruction of Market

14. (C) Showing photographs of a marketplace (catering to tourists) from before and after the April 3 clash of arms

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(Ref B), Sok An noted that Thai heavy weapons had set the market on fire, causing \$2.5 million in property destruction.

Although Cambodia had paid reparations to Thailand of over \$30 million due to the destruction of Thai property in anti-Thai riots in Phnom Penh in 2003, now the Thai were silent on the fire started by Thai weapons that ruined the livelihoods of 312 Cambodian families inside recognized Cambodian territory, he said. A diplomatic note the Royal Cambodian Ministry of Foreign Affairs sent directly to the Royal Thai Ministry of Foreign Affairs on May 11 has gone unanswered, he said. The RGC is planning an archaeological excavation on the area of the razed market, and will help restore the market with a well-laid out area of modern kiosks suitable to the environment. UNESCO was well aware of this destruction, he said and UNESCO Director General Koichura Matsura had issued a statement of concern on April 4, deploring the loss of life and calling for renewed negotiations on the border. Flipping through a large photo album depicting multiple bullet pock-marks to the ancient Preah Vihear temple, Sok An noted that UNESCO DG Matsura had separately called on the international community to ensure Preah Vihear's protection.

Plans Going Forward...

15. (C) In the meantime, Cambodia was developing its national plan to resettle the market families and those from a separate village that had sprung up within the panoramic view. These 800 families would be relocated to a model village 10 kilometers distant where Sok An had just helped build the first 5X10-meter wooden house, each of which would be situated on 5000 square meters of land. An inter-ministerial committee was ensuring that water, a school, a health center, pagoda, and modern market would all be located on this new land concession. Multiple ministries -- water resources, land management, interior, agriculture -- were actively involved and the Cambodian Mine Action Center had been called in to conduct humanitarian de-mining. (NOTE: Preah Vihear and the surrounding area was one of the last Khmer Rouge strongholds attached to then KR headquarters at Anlong Veng, which held out until 1998. END NOTE.)

...But Not Without the Help of the U.S.

16. (C) Sok An painted a picture of an active Cambodian team well served by international consultants, intent on creating a strong Management Plan for the Preah Vihear UNESCO World Heritage Site. He said that the U.S. could help by addressing a number of issues in Cambodian-Thai bilateral relations and by "encouraging both sides" to take action. Cambodia was the victim of an invasion on July 15, and although Cambodia has tried to negotiate several times, these negotiations have not gone forward. Cambodia has taken the view that slow negotiations are better than no negotiations, but both sides need the intention to go forward, he said. Cambodia enjoyed the warm support of the U.S. in Quebec and Cambodia hoped for the continued support of the U.S. Praising Thai Prime Minister Abhisit for agreeing to negotiation under the terms of a bilateral 2000 MOU on the border through a Joint Border Commission (JBC), Sok An was nonetheless skeptical that negotiations would move quickly. He said that he would meet with Thai DPM Suthep in July some time, but hinted that the bilateral demarcation team already agreed to by the JBC would have to start its work at Preah Vihear if any serious progress was to be made. Describing Thai maneuvering as "very tricky," and noting that Thai military movements were persistent in the Preah Vihear area, he called on the U.S. to push for bilateral troop withdrawals to positions consistent with the pre-July 15 status quo ante.

17. (C) COMMENT: Post will forward to the U.S. delegation to the UNESCO Committee meeting in Seville some of the background materials provided by Sok An. Following the trail of the bilateral negotiation on Preah Vihear is not always easy as it overlaps several Thai governments, some of which have timely reversed positions (e.g., a June 18, 2008 bilateral communique that UNESCO decided should be disregarded). Sok An frequently likes to cite Cambodian successes in verbal negotiations, even if not part of the official written record. While we recognize the merit in UNESCO's decision to request the RGC to invite Thailand to join the ICC, absent serious Thai engagement on a diplomatic

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resolution of the border issue, something has to give. The ICC needs to be formed to start its work. Similarly, Thai participation in the Management Plan would be ideal, but not as long as the presence of large numbers of Thai military personnel and equipment in the Preah Vihear area inhibit access to the site from Thailand. Post strongly recommends that we once again actively engage both sides in the border dispute, as we began to do in 2008 (Ref C), but were unable to sustain given the political upheaval in Thailand. Withdrawal of troops is the critical first step toward a more permanent solution to the border dispute and will help avert further armed clashes.

RODLEY